News: Iran said on Monday it will consider withdrawing from the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) if a dispute over its atomic programme goes before the UN Security Council.

Background

- Britain, France and Germany launched a process last week charging Iran with failing to observe the terms of the 2015 nuclear deal, a move that could eventually see the Security Council reimpose international sanctions on the country.

- Iran has accused the three EU member states of inaction over sanctions the United States reimposed on it after unilaterally withdrawing from the landmark accord in 2018.

What was the 2015 deal about?

- The landmark 2015 deal (JCPOA) reached with Britain, China, France, Germany, Russia and the United States gave Iran relief from sanctions in return for curbs on its nuclear programme.

- Since the U.S. pullout, Iran has progressively rolled back its commitments to the accord in retaliation.

- It has hit out at the three European nations that remain party to the tattered deal for failing to live up to their promises to ease the impact of U.S. sanctions on its oil-based economy.

About the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, commonly known as the Non-Proliferation Treaty or NPT, is an international treaty whose objective
is:

1. to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology,
2. to promote cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and
3. to further the goal of achieving nuclear disarmament and general and complete disarmament.

- As of August 2016, 191 states have adhered to the treaty, though North Korea, which acceded in 1985 but never came into compliance, announced its withdrawal from the NPT in 2003, following detonation of nuclear devices in violation of core obligations.

- **Four UN member states** have never accepted the NPT, three of which possess nuclear weapons: India, Israel, and Pakistan. In addition, South Sudan, founded in 2011, has not joined.

- The treaty defines nuclear-weapon states as those that have built and tested a nuclear explosive device before 1 January 1967; these are the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, and China (P5).

- **Four other states are known or believed to possess nuclear weapons**; India, Pakistan, and North Korea have openly tested and declared that they possess nuclear weapons, while Israel is deliberately ambiguous regarding its nuclear weapons status.

- Critics argue that the **NPT cannot stop the proliferation of nuclear weapons** or the motivation to acquire them. They express disappointment with the **limited progress on nuclear disarmament**, where the **five authorized nuclear weapons states still have 22,000 warheads** in their combined stockpile and have shown a reluctance to disarm further. Several high-ranking officials within the United Nations have said that they can do little to stop states using nuclear reactors to produce nuclear weapons.